



AHK Annual Report 2020

For the economy. Your local partner, worldwide.



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2020 AHK Annual Report Foreword

We are all looking back on a challenging year. Economies and societies worldwide were affected severely by COVID-19. Slumps in demand, production losses, disrupted supply chains, closed borders, cancelled trade fairs and other events hit many companies hard. Reliable and current information on foreign markets has rarely been more important than at this time. The global network of the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs), delegations and representative offices of the German economy proved to be an important partner for companies in this time of crisis – even though they too were severely impacted by the pandemic and still are in some cases. Like many companies, the AHKs will have to reinvent themselves after the crisis and develop innovative services together with their partners and clients. I greatly admire the determination with which this challenging task is being tackled. AHK charter flights, digital delegation trips or virtual reality visits of companies and trade fairs showcase that the AHKs provide their member companies at 140 locations in 92 countries with valuable solutions even when times are challenging. The current AHK World Business Outlook revealed: German companies abroad are counting on the economy continuing to catch-up in the coming months. Expectations for economic growth are rising in all parts of the world. Our colleagues at the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad look forward to accompanying this “re:start” process actively and to supporting German companies in reviving their foreign business following the pandemic. The AHKs are your local partner, worldwide.



Peter Adrian
President of the Association of German Chambers
of Commerce and Industry (DIHK e. V.)

The Covid-19 pandemic has also taken a serious toll on German foreign trade. After a 9.4 percent drop in exports last year, foreign trade is now back on track for growth. The demand from important markets like the USA and China is also picking up again. The German economy has already established a broad base, which is part of its strength. But there is still more potential to diversify and expand our trade relations – I am thinking here, for example, of the Asia-Pacific region, but also of new opportunities arising from the transformation in climate and digital policy. With our powerful promotion of foreign trade, we support German companies on their way abroad. The German Chambers of Commerce Abroad, delegate offices and representative offices, forming the AHK network assume an important role here and are always on hand as onsite contacts despite the extraordinarily challenging framework conditions created by the crisis. For me, the work of the AHK network is a best practice example of a private-public partnership and I am grateful to the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry for our excellent cooperation. Soon, we may look back proudly on 70 years of financial support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. Therefore, I felt it was only natural to continue to provide the AHK network, our partner, with a comprehensive financial safety net during the current crisis. What is more, the DIHK can count on the support of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy in the process of transforming into a public corporation. We will continue to support medium-sized German companies in their efforts to exploit opportunities for growth in export markets also in the future.

Peter Altmaier
Federal Minister for Economic
Affairs and Energy



2020 Highlights



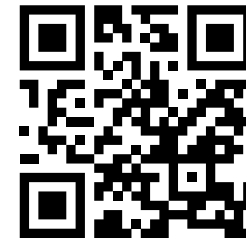
AHK NETWORK

Partner in times of crisis and for the RE:START

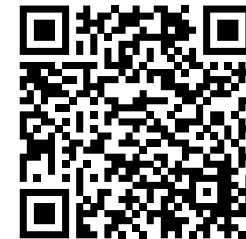
For almost 130 years, the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs) have been a reliable partner for German business abroad. With more than 140 locations in 92 countries, the AHK network has a powerful global presence. During the pandemic, the AHKs supported the German business community as partners providing daily updates on the situation in 92 countries and helping to overcome supply challenges and travel restrictions.

With the pandemic progressively being contained, foreign business has increasingly started to pick up again, too. The AHKs provide German companies with reliable support and many years of professional expertise in opening up new foreign markets and distributing new products abroad.

The www.ahk.de website and our new AHK LinkedIn channel <https://www.linkedin.com/company/deutschauslandshandelskammer> illustrate just how versatile their support is.



Website



LinkedIn

VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA AND ANGOLA

◀ Chancellor Merkel opens the 8th German-Angolan Business Forum

On her trip to Africa from 5 to 7 February 2020, Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel visited South Africa and Angola. Talks with the heads of state of the two countries were on the agenda, as were company tours and conferences with the local business community. The delegation included some ten company representatives from various sectors. The highlight of the Chancellor's visit to Angola was the opening of the 8th German-Angolan Business Forum.

Dr. Ilja Nothnagel, Member of the Executive Board of the DIHK, joined the business delegation in Angola and spoke at the business conference as well.

The Southern African-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised the programme for the visiting business representatives, which also included Dr. Ulrich Nußbaum, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. The Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Angola hosted the local business forum.



EAST AFRICA

◀ Federal President Steinmeier visits Kenya

On his trip to the East African country of Kenya in February 2020, the Federal President was accompanied by a business delegation of about ten, headed by SAFRI Chairman Prof. Dr. Heinz-Walter Große. A highlight of the programme was a business roundtable including Kenyan and German companies with the Federal President in attendance. This was organised by the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce for Eastern Africa. Another highlight was the opening of a B. Braun Melsungen AG production facility on the outskirts of Kenya's capital Nairobi with Thomas Bareiß, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

The programme was rounded off with the opening of a centre for vocational training by the Federal President and a visit to a Kenyan start-up centre for service providers in the IT industry.



DELEGATION OF GERMAN INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE IN SAUDI ARABIA

DIHK Chief Executive Officer Wansleben opens new office in Jeddah ▶

Dr. Martin Wansleben travelled to Saudi Arabia from 2 to 5 February 2020. His trip was prompted by the opening ceremony of the branch office of the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Saudi Arabia (GESALO) in Jeddah and the inauguration of their new delegate, Dr. Dalia Samra-Rothe, in Riyadh. The trip was dedicated to the large-scale reform and diversification plans of the Saudi economy, which are also supported by numerous German companies. The programme featured both an exchange with start-ups of young Saudi entrepreneurs in Jeddah and a visit to "Qiddiya", a tourism megaproject near Riyadh.



400 GUESTS AT THE HAUS DER DEUTSCHEN WIRTSCHAFT

1st German-Greek Economic Forum ►

At the beginning of the year, face-to-face events could still be held. The last such event was the first German-Greek Business Forum, organised by AHK Greece and the DIHK. More than 400 participants gathered at the Haus der Deutschen Wirtschaft in Berlin on 9 March 2020. The Economics Ministers of the two countries, Peter Altmaier and Adonis Georgiadis opened the event, followed by Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis who shed light on the current situation and prospects of German-Greek economic relations. Panels and workshops with top-level speakers from politics and business explored the potential for innovation and investment as well as topics including the green economy, financing, and business opportunities for companies.



TOP-LEVEL EXCHANGE FOR OVER 30 YEARS

▼ Asia-Pacific Conference – digital for the first time



For more than 30 years, the Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business (APK) has put a spotlight on the exchange between top-level representatives from politics and business from Germany and the Asia-Pacific. Due to the pandemic, two firsts occurred on 19 October 2020: firstly, the largest German business conference focussing on Asia held outside of Germany took place online as “APK digital” for the first time. Secondly, Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel was in attendance to welcome the participants. She went on to promote diversification, equality, transparency, legal certainty and the protection of intellectual property against the background of the Policy guidelines for the Indo-Pacific of the Federal Government published in September. Chairman of the Asia-Pacific Committee of German Business (APA) and Siemens CEO Joe Kaeser and Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Peter Altmaier opened the conference who called for increased free trade, fair competition and reduced protectionism.

Many of the AHKs’ other formats also explored the Asian-Pacific area as the most dynamically growing region in the world.

MOBILITY IN TIMES OF THE PANDEMIC

AHK charter flights return managers to their location abroad ►

Last year, AHKs around the world organised charter flights for German company representatives who were unable to return to their places of work due to the pandemic. The first charter flight took off at the end of May 2020, heading from Frankfurt to Tianjin. This was followed by some 20 additional AHK charter flights to China, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and Russia. The AHKs provided daily updates on entry and quarantine regulations on their website including locations for which charter flights were not available.



INNOVATIVE SERVICES

◀ (Almost) directly on site with augmented reality

World market leaders, world champions in export, hidden champions: the main reason for the success of German companies is that their products and services are in demand worldwide. For more than 125 years, the AHKs have been lending a helping hand in turning national success into international success. AHKs build bridges, open doors, arrange contacts and solve problems. Especially during the pandemic, when international travel was severely restricted, the AHKs supported German companies with innovative solutions to continue to successfully tap into international markets.

They say, it's always best to see for yourself. As this was often extremely difficult during the coronavirus pandemic, the AHKs devised innovative solutions to support companies: equipped with augmented reality glasses and live support from AHK colleagues on site, German entrepreneurs were able to meet current and potentially new business partners at events or their company offices from the comfort of their own home. This way, scheduled installation and maintenance work could be carried out. With these innovative services, German companies were also able to ensure that their products remained represented at international trade fairs. The cross-border virtual trade fairs "ExpoAlemania" and "AHK Industrial Suppliers Forum" proved to be particularly interesting examples in this context.



VIRTUAL TRADE FAIRS IN LATIN AMERICA AND EUROPE

ExpoAlemania and the AHK Industrial Suppliers Forum connect companies

The first digital multi-sector trade fair linking Germany and the countries of Latin America took place in July 2020. With **ExpoAlemania**, all AHKs in the regions had set out to support the “RE:START” of trade and business after the first wave of the pandemic on both sides of the Atlantic. On the German side, they were backed by the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), the Federation of German Wholesale, Foreign Trade and Services (BGA) and the Association for Latin America (LAV). All expectations were surpassed by the result: **more than 200,000 visitors** and **over 300 exhibitors** were able to investigate new business opportunities during the three-day fair.

This digital trade fair focussed on the food industry, mechanical engineering and mining, logistics as well as innovation. Special platforms were provided for start-ups. At a parallel symposium, exhibitors presented their new solutions and services to a total of 17,000 participants in 83 webinars. Although the trade fair was geared towards Latin American and German visitors, the digital format meant that visitors from the USA, Europe, Africa and Asia were able to attend the fair, which the AHKs had promoted worldwide. Due to its enormous success, ExpoAlemania will remain an integral part of the portfolio of the Latin American AHKs in the coming years.

The European AHKs have also developed an innovative, digital trade fair programme that is to be firmly established: 13 European AHKs, representing **16 countries**, have developed the **AHK Industrial Suppliers Forum** together, a new virtual platform for procuring suitable suppliers. On 19 November 2020, it was the first time that German buyers had the opportunity to visit the digital booths of over **150 exhibitors**, obtain background information and hold one-to-one conversations. At the same time, the participating countries and partners used virtual workshops to present themselves.

The AHK Poland coordinated this pilot project. Other participating countries included Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Moldova, Norway, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia. For 2021, the plan is to transform the Forum into a permanent European supplier platform focussing on industry, a platform for individual conversations and regular events. This platform shall soon be used to organise individual conversation and regular events in the future. The “AHK Industrial Suppliers Forum 2.0” involving the countries of Portugal, Spain, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Finland and Croatia is due to start in September 2021. Additional countries are planned to join from 2022.



AHKs provide a
platform



MEMBERSHIP

Established and new contacts

The AHKs are highly committed to the interests of their members – also and especially during the pandemic. For example, the efforts of AHK staff meant that employees of German companies located in France were able to qualify for the French short-time working allowance. German companies who do not have branches or subsidiaries in France but do have permanent employees in France were thus able to apply for short-time working allowance for their local employees. This was possible if the companies were paying social insurance contributions for their employees and if their business activities had temporarily come to a halt due to the pandemic. It enabled many German SMEs based in France to save their employees from unemployment.

The AHKs responded swiftly and excellently to the crisis, softening the blow of pandemic restrictions. Both this and their commitment to the interests of German business abroad meant that the links within the AHK network with a total of **47,000 members** could be strengthened.

Especially during the pandemic, AHK members were able to benefit from a strong, global AHK network with competent contacts from business, alliances, associations, and also politics – in Germany and in more than 90 host countries. As an intermediary, the AHKs also provide companies, ranging from small to large, with a valuable local platform to network and exchange information on site.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Valuable expertise

The interest to volunteer with the AHKs continues to grow: in 2018, there were 2,200 volunteers. By the year 2020, there were already almost **2,700 people** contributing their many years of experience to the boards and committees of the Chambers of Commerce Abroad. This increase highlights the importance that businesses attach to the work of the chambers.

Volunteer representatives on the board share their valuable knowledge with the full-time staff and assist the AHKs in their work, so the full potential can be reached. Due to their management experience in German companies and companies abroad, the board members also act as important advisors and initiators. Alongside the AHKs, they expand networks and effectively represent the interests of the members. They thus form an indispensable pillar in our AHK network.



47,000

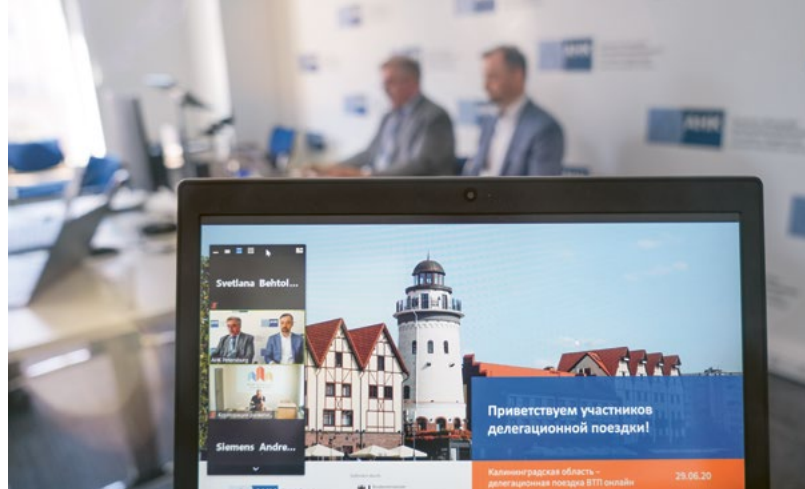
MEMBERSHIPS WORLDWIDE

PEOPLE SERVING ON AHK COMMITTEES



2,700

VOLUNTEER BOARD MEMBERS



“After the lockdown, we are finally focussing on “opening up” again: opening up new market opportunities digitally, resiliently and sustainably. The AHK network is well positioned for this task – also thanks to the BMWi federal subsidy that aims at providing even more targeted support for tangible achievements in foreign trade.”

MinR Dr. Christian Storost

Head of the Promotion of Foreign Trade Department at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy

AHK EVENTS

Expertise meets network

When the pandemic started to emerge, the AHKs were able to shift their range of specialist and informational events into a virtual space within a very short period of time. Throughout the year, the AHKs adapted their specialist and informational events dynamically to meet local pandemic developments and regulations.

With a total of **6,300 digital, hybrid and face-to-face events** organised by the AHKs, the total number of events was actually higher than that of the previous year. With **734,000 participants**, attendance, however, was significantly lower compared to last year.

734,000

VISITORS

6,300

EVENTS

FOCUS ON

Digital specialist and informational events

The AHKs' professional and industrial expertise is also highly sought after at informational and specialist events. The number of events with AHK involvement is increasing steadily. Last year, the Chambers of Commerce Abroad alone organised almost **2,800** such **events**. Furthermore, they supported many other partner events with their expertise. A novelty in 2020: almost all events took place virtually offering varied digital formats.

EVENTS



“Despite the pandemic, the region south of the Sahara remains attractive for German companies – this was underlined by the great interest in our IHK-AHK Online Consulting Days for Sub-Saharan Africa. Our AHK network was able to display its great general and sector-specific expertise and position itself as a competent local partner for the representatives of the participating companies. Thanks to the excellent collaboration with the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, companies from all over Germany were able to benefit from our event.”

Matthias Boddenberg
CEO AHK Southern Africa

IHK-AHK ONLINE CONSULTING DAYS

Discovering potential in Sub-Saharan Africa virtually

Titled „Business opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa, the first IHK-AHK Online Consulting Days for Sub-Saharan Africa were held on 17 and 18 September 2020. Thirty colleagues of the AHK network answered specific questions posed by 44 participating IHK member companies from across Germany in more than 130 virtual advisory sessions.

Thanks to the in-depth sector expertise at the various AHK locations, company representatives received general market information as well as specific advice on potential sectors such as renewable energies, water management, agribusiness or mining and raw materials.

The individual consultations kicked off with a 45-minute live opening event, which included a stimulating welcome address by SAFRI Chairman Prof. Dr. Heinz-Walter Große and an overview of the AHK network in Sub-Saharan Africa by Matthias Boddenberg, CEO of the Southern African-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This was complemented by Director Government & Public Affairs at WILO SE Kay Hoffmann with an authentic glimpse into the strategy and activities of the pump manufacturer from Dortmund on the African continent.

AHKs are
service providers

Γέφυρα επικοινωνίας
Kommunikationsbrücke

παγκόσμιου δικτύου Διεθνών Εμπορικών και Βιομηχανικών Επιμελητηρίων
s weltweiten Netzwerk in Deutschen Industrie- und Handelskammern



Γέφυρα επικοινωνίας
Kommunikationsbrücke

Μέλος Γενικών Γερμανικών Εμπορικών και Βιομηχανικών Επιμελητηρίων
Teil des Allgemeinen Deutschen Industrie- und Handelskammertages



SERVICES REVENUE

AHKs are problem solvers

The global AHK network serves as an initial point of contact for German companies wishing to establish and expand their activities abroad. As part of their service brand “DEinternational”, the AHKs provide interested companies with tailored answers to their questions – from market analysis and the procurement of business partners to legal and tax information.

The multilingual staff at the local AHKs understand the opportunities and risks in the countries in question and are highly knowledgeable about the industry. This enables them to provide German companies with reliable and customised advice. They build bridges between markets and cultures and, together with the companies, lead business ideas to success. DEinternational services are also geared towards local clients in the individual target markets who are looking to expand into the German market.

In 2020, the AHKs generated a global revenue of 99 million euros with their services despite pandemic-related economic losses. The AHKs’ services revenue therefore dropped by about a quarter compared to the previous year.

€ 99 MILLION

2020

TRADE FAIR EXHIBITORS AND VISITORS

AHKs as an important link

For many years, the AHKs have been serving as representatives and marketing partners for a myriad of German trade fair companies. Beyond that, they also attract exhibitors and visitors for trade fairs within Germany and abroad. The key to their effective acquisition of trade fair exhibitors and visitors are AHKs' close relationships with the companies and their successful work on site.

In light of the large number of trade fairs that had to be cancelled, hosted digitally or postponed to the following year, however, trade fair business has lagged far behind that of previous years or has ceased altogether.

This is not least due to the fact that the AHK trade fair business is strongly influenced by the activities of the German trade fair companies, whose business effectively came to a standstill due to the pandemic. The situation was better, however, in regions where AHKs also participate in the local trade fair business and where local trade fairs could be held again later in the year (including Russia, the Gulf region and China later on). However, this does not change the overall picture of a tough year for the AHK trade fair business.

AGILE PROVEN PARTNERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS

German Energy Solutions Initiative goes virtual – within just a week

While many were still rubbing the sleep from their eyes, the German Energy Solutions Initiative of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, in collaboration with the DIHK project team that coordinates AHK projects, took the plunge within just a week! Shortly after schools and preschools were closed in Germany in mid-March, the first virtual AHK business “trips” were already taking place.

As part of the German Energy Solutions Initiative, the AHKs facilitated some 70 digital AHK business trips worldwide between March and December of 2020. Virtual conferences and individual digital meetings were well attended and ensured that Germany’s SME energy sector was able to expand its foreign business even during the pandemic. Not a single project had to be cancelled due to Covid-19.

Even in the pandemic year of 2020, the AHK German Energy Solutions Initiative project at the DIHK boosted networking opportunities and the exchange of experience among AHKs. Their skills for implementing virtual formats were thus honed worldwide and across the board for the future.

The fourth quarter of 2020 revolved around analyses and the question of which virtual elements the German Energy Solutions Initiative should incorporate into its set of measures also for the future. Because the fact is that virtually, you can reach entirely new target groups. A clear example of this is the specialist conference in Chile which welcomed about 400 participants from Chile and Germany, as well as participants from Brazil, Costa Rica, the USA and Indonesia.



FACTS AND FIGURES OF THE GERMAN ENERGY SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE

170

ANNUAL PROJECTS, OF WHICH OVER
100 WITH AHK INVOLVEMENT

1,600

COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES
PARTICIPATE ANNUALLY

95 %

HIGHER EXPORT REVENUES ACHIEVED
BY SMES SINCE THE YEAR 2000

€ 18.5 MILLION

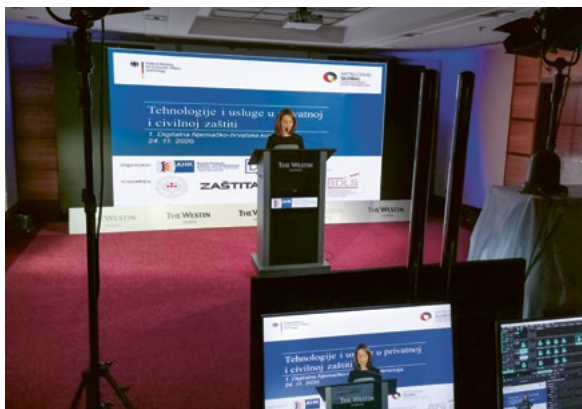
IS THE ANNUAL SPENDING OF THE GERMAN ENERGY SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE ON ITS PROGRAMMES



“We immediately put our heads together with our implementation partners to think about: what we can actually do now? Everybody knew from the start that we could not just sit back and wait for things to unfold, but that we had to do something. We quickly realised that we could also achieve a great deal digitally. This synergy, our sticking and pulling together was a tremendous experience.”

MinR'in Christina Wittek

Head of the German Energy Solutions Initiative Department at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy



AHK DELEGATION TRIPS

Exploring new markets virtually

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, delegation trips abroad were an excellent option for companies to explore business opportunities with the support of the local AHKs. Participants were able to establish initial contacts with potential partners and representatives from politics and business. They were able to familiarise themselves with the political, cultural and economic characteristics of the respective target market.

Due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, a large number of delegation and business trips to and from Germany had to be postponed or cancelled in 2020. There was a noticeable drop here compared to the previous year: with around **400 delegation trips**, the number of delegation trips to Germany and their target locations organised by the AHKs decreased by roughly 50 percent in 2020 compared to the previous year.

At the same time, the idea of virtual delegation trips increasingly attracted the interest of German companies, which soon came to appreciate the benefits of circumventing long distance travel. The AHK staff organised the virtual delegation trips so they could be easily integrated into the office routine and time zone of the companies involved. Despite Covid-19, it was thus possible to give numerous companies the opportunity of exploring the potential of their own industry in other countries.

400

DELEGATION TRIPS

GOING INTERNATIONAL

IHK company survey on foreign business

The effects of the coronavirus pandemic that started to spread in early 2020 will continue to impact the foreign business of German companies far beyond this past year. The annual IHK survey “Going International” published at the beginning of March 2021, which included some 2,400 internationally operating companies, reveals this. According to the survey, three out of four companies are still affected by travel restrictions. For 69 percent, it is also a challenge that trade fairs and events are still not possible to be held in many places. Almost half of the internationally operating companies are postponing investments due to the coronavirus pandemic. 44 percent are experiencing less demand for their products and services. Every third company reports a lack of goods or services as a result of the pandemic.

Due to numerous challenges in the supply chains, German companies are making adjustments in their foreign business: two-thirds of the companies with supply difficulties are planning to adapt their supply chains to compensate for restrictions in delivery traffic or production losses.

Of the companies planning to diversify, 47 percent are looking for new or additional suppliers for their products. About one in five companies now has suppliers in multiple countries.

Regardless of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, 47 percent of companies feel that trade barriers have increased in their international business. This figure is only slightly lower compared to previous year's survey. German companies report most often that they are confronted with increased security requirements. Additional testing of products and internationally uncommon safety regulations are costing companies time and money. Local certification requirements have similar effects and pose an obstacle to international business for almost every second company. In addition to other challenges, every fifth company has noticed an increasing push towards local content.

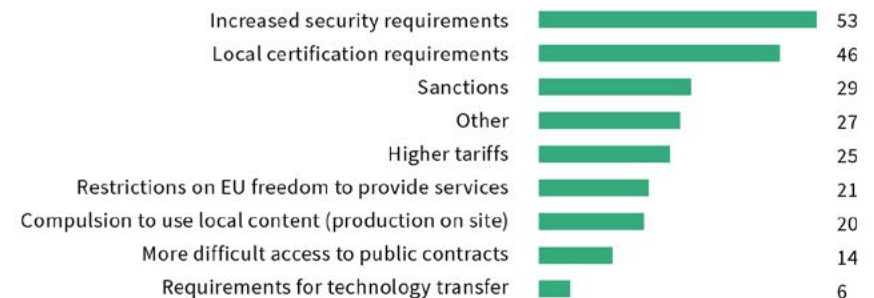
WHICH EFFECTS OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ARE CURRENTLY WEIGHING PARTICULARLY HEAVILY ON YOUR COMPANY?

In percent, multiple answers possible



INCREASE IN TRADE BARRIERS IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

In percent, multiple answers possible





CHAMBERS FOR GREENTECH

AHKs as links between the environmental policy abroad and the German environmental economy

The „Chambers for GreenTech“, a joint project of DIHK Service GmbH and the AHK network, is part of the Export Initiative for Green Technology of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). It combines environmental protection and the promotion of foreign trade. The project aims at improving local environmental conditions based on a transfer of technology and expertise. It simultaneously seeks to smooth the way for German environmental companies entering markets in third countries. Supported by the “Chambers for GreenTech” project team, the AHKs have already implemented 41 projects in 24 countries since 2016. These involved the areas of water- and wastewater management, circular economy, green mobility as well as hydrogen and fuel cell technologies for a decentralised power supply. The main focus here is on the exchange of knowledge and the development of a network between important stakeholders in the target countries and experts based in Germany.

SUBSTANCE OF THE FUTURE

Sustainable economic growth with green hydrogen

A sustainable economic development without green hydrogen seems close to impossible. In light of this, the “Chambers for GreenTech” project invited people to join their online event “Internationale Märkte und Kooperationen für grünen Wasserstoff” (International Markets and Cooperation for Green Hydrogen) on 2 December 2020. Almost 380 participants followed the invitation and learned more about current hydrogen developments, potential for international cooperation and national funding initiatives. It emerged that hydrogen is a major building block for solving the main issues of the energy transition and climate protection. It also became clear that the key for Germany maintaining and expanding its technological lead in the hydrogen sector is to strengthen international partnerships. The AHKs play a pivotal role here: AHK alliances for green hydrogen were thus formed in Brazil, Chile, Australia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Morocco. They initiate and organise activities including workshops, delegation trips and congresses, as well as the development of online platforms. These activities support companies both in forming consortia projects on an industrial scale and in studies of the industry seeking to identify relevant stakeholders and their future challenges and opportunities.

Against this backdrop, four pilot projects will be launched in 2021 as part of the Green Technologies Export Initiative. They aim at highlighting the potential for local partners and German companies in relation to an off-grid and decentralised power supply. Many countries experience a power supply less stable and reliable than that of Central Europe. This is a major problem in remote areas and also especially for crucial infrastructure such as telephone masts and hospitals. To solve this problem, hydrogen and fuel cell technologies may prove to be an important piece of the puzzle. For this purpose, studies focussing on analyses of demand and potential are being conducted by the AHK Chile, the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Nigeria, the AHK Thailand and the AHK Philippines. “Chambers for GreenTech” supports the AHKs here and ensures that the study results are transferred to the German environmental economy.

WEBSITE VIEWS

A powerful web presence to lean on in the crisis

The pandemic was also the single most dominant theme on the AHK websites around the globe. Traffic increased steadily, especially on pages where companies, clients and members could access information on the latest restrictions and conditions for their foreign business. From updates and news tickers to news pages – the AHKs provided highly up-to-date and comprehensive media services, establishing them as indispensable sources of information during the crisis. With some 250,000 hits each on their Covid-19 info pages, the websites of Poland, Russia and the Netherlands took top positions in the shared web presence.

Speaking of shared web presence: thanks to the uniform corporate design, website visitors now find it a lot easier to navigate between services and offers across countries. The website of the AHK Spain, for example, is visited not only from Germany and the host country, but also from Switzerland, the USA and Mexico. Morocco has meanwhile seen an increase in visitors from Belgium, the Netherlands and Finland.

After the new e-privacy regulation redefined the rules for the use of cookies at the end of 2019, preventing the comprehensive tracking of website visitors without their consent, the figures for **2020** levelled out at around **4.8 million** consolidated **website visits** worldwide.

4.8 MILLION

WEBSITE SESSIONS



IHK NETWORK OFFICE FOR AFRICA

Sparking German companies' enthusiasm for Africa

Africa is becoming more and more relevant for German companies. For this reason, the brand new IHK Network Office for Africa (INA) operated by DIHK Service GmbH, was founded in June 2020 to boost the promotion of German foreign trade in Africa. INA focusses especially on supporting SMEs in tapping into African markets. Partnering with the Chambers of Commerce and Industry (IHKs) and the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs), INA offers advice on how to enter markets and potential sectors that await. It establishes contacts and provides information on events and funding possibilities. As part of the Africa Business Network of the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy, INA is backed by powerful partner organisations. INA's services primarily focus on providing initial advice on the promotion of foreign trade.

The positive response to this new service is an indicator of the high level of interest in Africa: INA was thus able to reach some 775 participants in 16 events, in the first seven months of the project – including, for example, the first meeting of the new Africa working group of the Potsdam Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the “KMU Marktchancen und nachhaltige Investitionen in Afrika” (SME market opportunities and sustainable investments in Africa) event organised by the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce. In addition, INA advised 42 companies on their specific business projects in Africa – a positive result given the challenging business conditions in 2020.



In addition to the free, customised information on relevant funding possibilities, the advised companies accrue benefit especially from INA's excellent regional reach, which is grounded in the close collaboration with the 79 Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the nine Chambers of Commerce and Delegations in Africa. A partnership with Dr. Wolfgang Epp, Managing Director of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Reutlingen ensures that the services are aligned with the needs of Africa-interested companies in the region, among other things.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy is funding the IHK network office for Africa with 2.2 million euros, initially until 2024. The plan is to increase the number of staff to six in the long run.

Heiko Schwiderowski (l.) & Philipp Andree (r.)

International Markets, DIHK e. V.

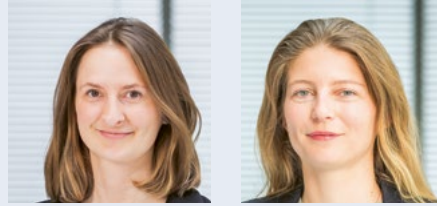
schwiderowski.heiko@dihk.de | andree.philipp@dihk.de



What is your role in the DIHK?

We are the DIHK directors of the Sub-Saharan Africa Division (Heiko Schwiderowski) and the Middle East and North Africa Division (Philipp Andree) focussing on international markets. We promote the regions we support to federal ministries and serve as contacts for Chambers of Commerce and Industry and other associations.

Marie Scholz (l.) & Julia Seibert (r.)
Liaison Office AHK network Sub-Saharan
Africa, DIHK DEinternational GmbH
scholz.marie@dihk.de | seibert.julia@dihk.de



What is your role in the DIHK?

We are affiliated with the AHK network and part of DIHK DEinternational GmbH. We focus on the AHK network in Sub-Saharan Africa. Together with the DIHK and IHKs, we create synergy effects to ensure a high visibility of AHK activity in Germany.

How does your work support German companies in their (planned) business activities in Africa?

We let the companies know about any services, competence centres and events that are available through the AHK network in Sub-Saharan Africa. We also organise events across locations, such as the IHK-AHK Online Advisory Days and a selection of webinars, to share the business opportunities in the region and the expertise of the AHKs with as many companies, who are interested in Africa, as possible.

How do you collaborate with the AHKs in Africa?

As a liaison office, we are effectively an extension of the AHK network for Sub-Saharan Africa here in Germany. We are in touch with the AHKs abroad on a daily basis and are therefore familiar with the issues and projects of each individual location.

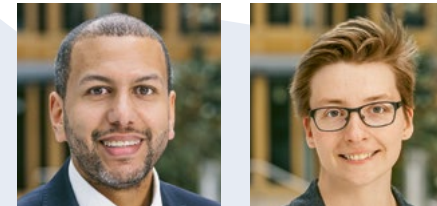
How do you collaborate with the AHKs in Africa?

We assist the AHKs in North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa in representing their interests at federal ministries and other partners and institutions in Berlin, as well as in shaping their economic policy work. We also support the AHK network when it comes to acquiring projects.

How does your work support German companies in their (planned) business activities in Africa?

With our many years of experience, we are always at the companies' disposal to provide an assessment of business in specific countries, sectors and potential partners.

Introducing the Africa contact persons at the DIHK



Dr. Thando Sililo (l.) & Viktoria Landers (r.)
IHK Network Office for Africa
(INA), DIHK Service GmbH
ina@dihk.de

What is your role in the DIHK?

We are a BMWi-funded project at DIHK Service GmbH. INA is responsible for the promotion of trade and industry: partnering with the Chambers of Commerce and Industry (IHKs) and the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs), we offer advice and information on the promotion of foreign trade upon entering African markets. As part of the Africa Business Network, INA also enjoys the support of partners such as the GTAI, BMWi export initiatives, the German Agency for Business and Economic Development as well as established alliances and associations with expertise in Africa.

How do you collaborate with the AHKs in Africa?

We collaborate with the AHKs and delegations as part of our advisory services and organise events together.

How does your work support German companies in their (planned) business activities in Africa?

We provide companies with a final overview of the BMWi funding instruments relevant to them and refer them to appropriate contacts for further in-depth advice.

AHKs represent the
**interests of the business
community**

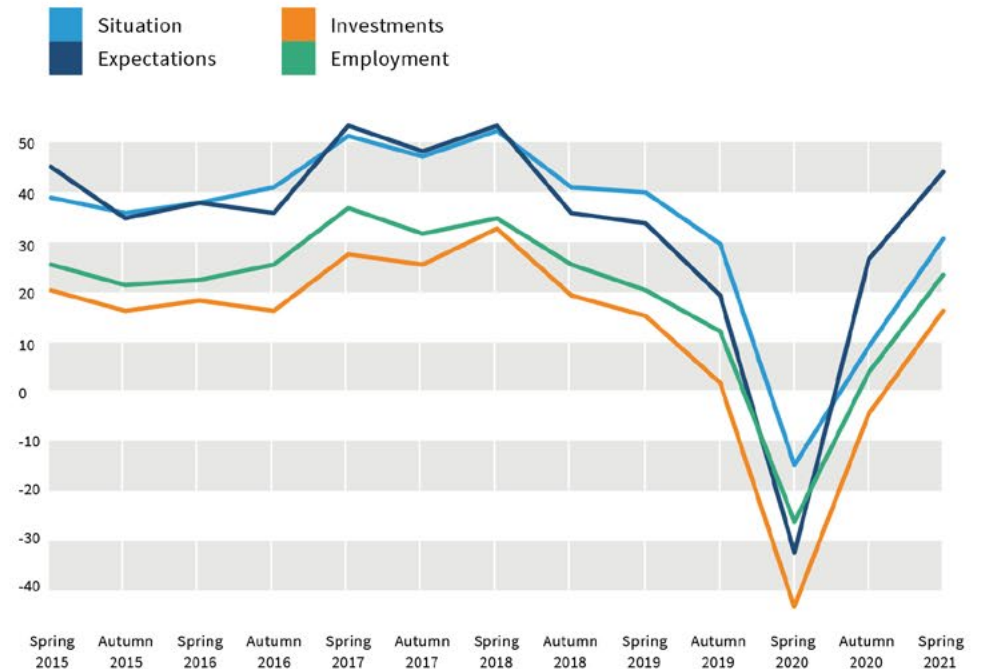


Taking a look at the development of the global economy

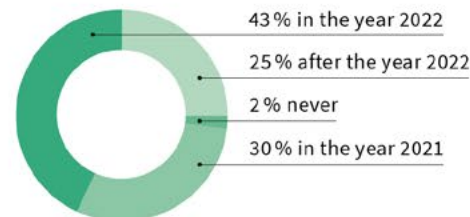
The economic situation of the companies in the AHK network has improved again after the collapse of the global economy last year. Nevertheless, the effects of the coronavirus pandemic continue to disrupt companies' business activities in many countries. For the AHK World Business Outlook, the AHK member companies regularly answer surveys on the business situation and expectations for the future development of their own business and the local economy. In addition to investment and employment plans, the companies report on the most significant risk factors and, since last year, on pandemic-related restrictions. The survey is our unique selling point. Our organisation is one of a kind in our ability to present the global perspectives and challenges for internationally operating German companies.

With more than 10,000 company responses, our AHK World Business Outlook was once again able to reveal important insights into the business situation of companies in 2020. As a result of the pandemic, companies reduced their investments and number of staff at international locations. The situation and expectations, too, hit rock bottom. A lack of business trips, cancelled trade fairs and events, lower demand, and problems in the supply chain posed challenges for the companies. Silver lining: our latest surveys indicate that the companies' business is on the mend. Accordingly, business expectations for the coming months have shot up.

GERMAN BUSINESSES ABROAD
BALANCE OF "BETTER MINUS WORSE" - ANSWERS IN POINTS



ESTIMATE OF WHEN THE ECONOMY WILL HAVE RECOVERED SUSTAINABLY GLOBALLY





“Our prosperity is grounded in foreign trade. When it comes to opening up foreign markets, efficient structures to promote foreign trade, such as the powerful AHK networks abroad, provide great support for the German economy – especially in challenging times such as these.”

Dr. Volker Treier

DIHK Head of Foreign Trade | Member of the Executive Board
Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK e. V.)

CONTACTS ON SITE

AHKs connect people and institutions

AHKs have powerful networks in their regions. They establish important contacts with political representatives. They maintain contacts with vocational schools, colleges and universities and often collaborate on projects with them. At the same time, the AHKs are steadily expanding their local network of contacts. Last year alone, more than 15,000 contacts were formed with foreign chambers and associations. Together, they informed companies about current pandemic developments as well as existing and new business opportunities. The AHKs are also in close communication with local partners in the trade fair industry as well as in foreign trade and investment promotion. Even though the local exchange was hampered by the pandemic, the AHKs were able to rely on their long-standing partner networks at their locations and thus advocate even more effectively for the interests of German business abroad.

15,000

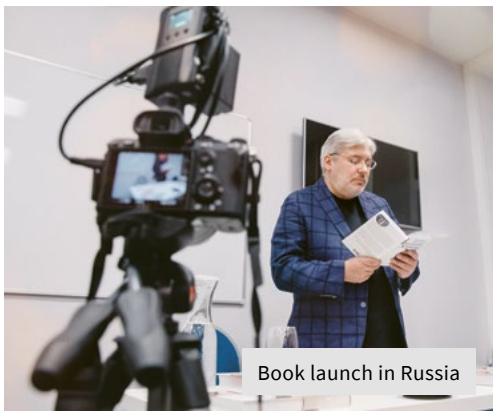
CONTACTS WITH FOREIGN CHAMBERS AND ASSOCIATIONS



Industry 4.0 seminar in Taiwan



Livestream from the TV studio of the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Moscow



Book launch in Russia



Event of the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Moscow

Outlook
**The AHK network as
partner for the RE:START**



“Solution-oriented, pragmatic and with strong local expertise”

Mr Leipold, many of us faced extraordinary challenges this past year. How did the AHKs support companies in overcoming pandemic-related challenges in their foreign business?

The AHK network always puts the clients' challenges first. Clients do not only include German companies that are or want to become active on foreign markets, but also foreign companies seeking to expand their economic relations with Germany. The transport restrictions caused by the pandemic posed an enormous challenge to the business of all of these companies. Employees were unable to return to their places of work, international supply chains were – and still are in some cases – disrupted, and the list goes on. The AHK employees supported the companies with their tried-and-tested approach: solution-oriented, pragmatic and with strong local expertise. A great example of this are the widely publicised AHK charter flights that took off from mid-2020 when the borders were closed in many countries. Here, the AHKs made the “Mission Impossible” become possible and managed to return managers back to their place of work abroad and reunite them with their families after months of separation.

With more than 2,200 employees, the AHK network also thrives on a regular exchange across countries and regions. Did this exchange suffer a heavy blow during the pandemic?

Personal exchange can never be fully replaced. We are also very much looking forward to a direct exchange on site with colleagues and companies soon. Nevertheless, I personally am absolutely thrilled about how tight-knit the AHK network has become during the pandemic. Our colleagues switched to digital communication formats very quickly. Global weekly video conferences covering a variety of topics have been established. AHK employees meanwhile exchange information in a very focussed and swift manner across the global network. Our now powerful digital work processes, which we will continue to advance further in the coming years, played their part in making this possible.

The German economy has reinvented itself in some areas during the pandemic. Many companies have also digitised their internal work processes further and adapted their products to the technical needs of the future. How is this going to affect the AHK business?

We anticipate that companies will want to continue trying out new digital formats with the AHKs. The pilot services involving augmented reality or the AHKs' digital delegation trips are worth mentioning here. The AHKs have seen significantly more interest in these than initially imagined to be honest. We take this as a strong sign to continue to approach companies innovatively with new digital services also in the future.

Furthermore, the AHK network is excited to assist companies, who spent time during the pandemic to refine their products or develop new ones, in successfully launching these new products on global markets. The AHKs have decades of experience in helping German companies to find the perfect local partner for production or distribution in 92 countries. They are a solid anchor abroad and a reliable partner for the German economy, when it comes to successfully combining reinventing their own products and restarting foreign business.



Benjamin Leipold

Managing Director German Chambers
of Commerce Abroad (AHK)

DIHK e. V. – German Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Current information on the RE:START



Your AHK experts

The AHKs support you in setting up and expanding your business abroad. Find your contact here, listed by target market.



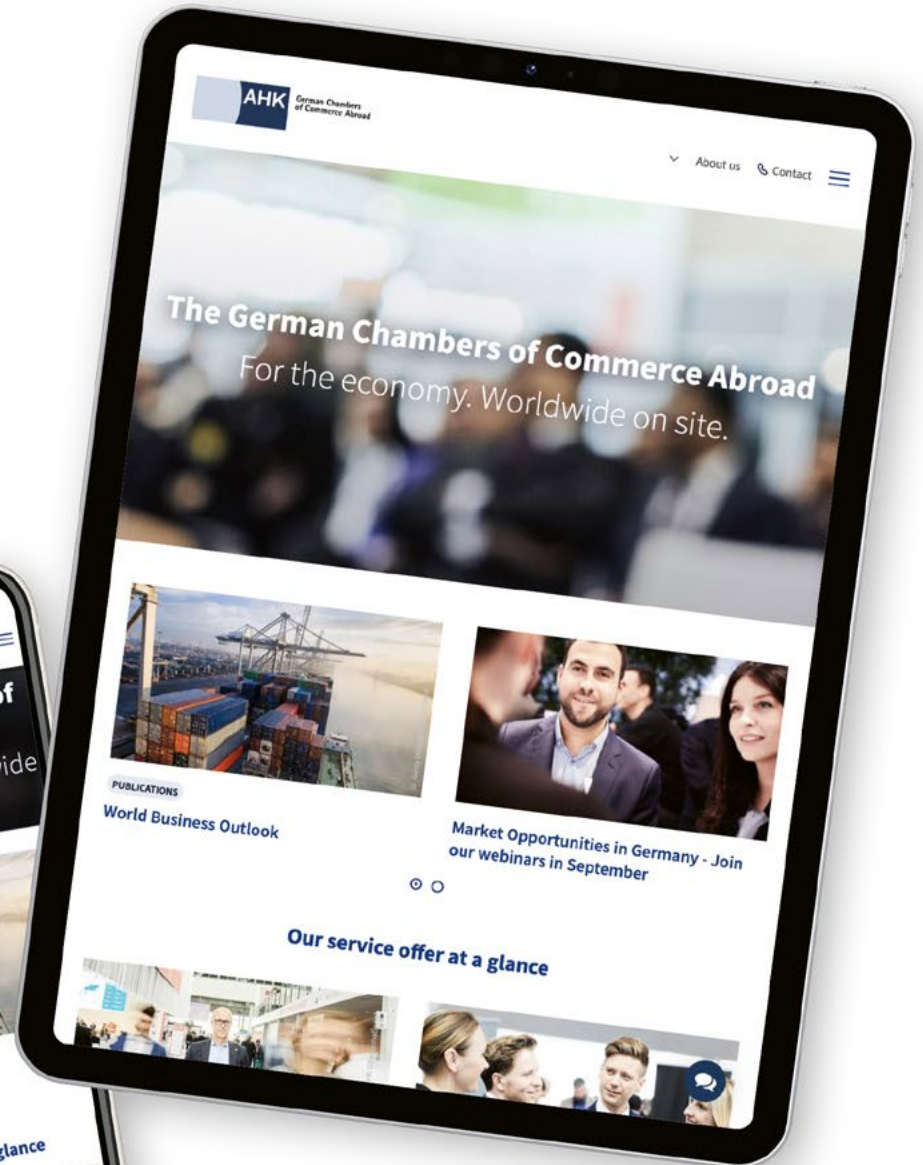
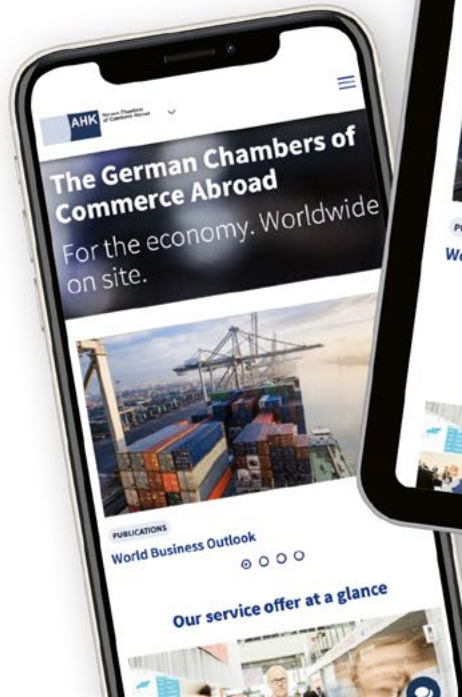
News from the AHK network

Our new AHK-LinkedIn channel keeps you up to date with the latest news from the global AHK network.



Get more information here!

The AHK website provides more detailed information on our more than 140 locations. Visit the “Corona Compass” to get first-hand information on the latest pandemic developments.



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NOTE

Whenever this publication refers to employees etc., this naturally refers to employees of all genders. The use of only one gender was chosen for better readability and is not intended to be discriminatory.



Partner Weltweit

The German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs) offer companies and politicians – both in Germany and in the host countries – access to a unique, professional and global network. Our work serves one goal: a dynamic, successful and open German foreign trade, to meet the interests of our clients and members.

www.ahk.de

As of: 2021

